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RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 0442  
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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

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NSC FOR NEA STAFF

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HQ USAF FOR X0XX  
DA WASHDC FOR SASA  
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA  
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR  
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD  
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD  
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL  
PARIS ALSO FOR POL  
ROME FOR MFO

SIPDIS  
E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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[1](#)1. Iran

[1](#)2. Mideast

[1](#)3. U.S.-Israel Relations

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Key stories in the media:  
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HaQaretz reported that a senior Islamic Republic official told foreign diplomats two weeks ago in London that senior Tehran officials are recommending a preemptive strike against Israel to prevent an Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear reactors. The official, Dr. Seyed G. Safavi, said that recent threats by Israeli authorities have strengthened this position, but that as of yet, a preemptive strike has not been integrated into Iranian policy. HaQaretz quoted an Israeli political official as saying that senior Jerusalem officials were shown Safavi's remarks, which are considered highly sensitive. The source said that the briefing in London dealt with a number of issues, primarily a potential Israeli attack on an Iranian reactor. Yediot quoted Iranian intelligence sources as saying that Iran has captured spy doves near nuclear installations.

Leading media reported that President Shimon Peres will leave Thursday for an official visit to Egypt, the first such visit by an Israeli president in several years. The Jerusalem Post quoted diplomatic sources in Jerusalem as saying that the meeting is possible because of the current leadership vacuum in Jerusalem. Media reported that Peres is expected to present his Egyptian counterpart, Hosni Mubarak, with his proposal for reforming how Israel and its Arabs neighbors negotiate peace agreements. Under the proposal, which is currently being formulated by the offices of the president, FM Tzipi Livni, and Defense Minister Ehud Barak, Israel would negotiate with representatives of all Arab countries in accordance with the 2002 Saudi peace initiative.

Leading media reported that Transportation Minister Shaul Mofaz and other Kadima parliamentarians refuse to enter a narrow-based government with PM-designate Tzipi Livni that would include Meretz but not Shas. Maariv quoted Livni associates as saying that Shas and Netanyahu have agreed on the issue of child allowances.

Major media reported that Gaza militants fired a Qassam rocket into the western Negev last night, the first in over a month. Following the strike, DM Ehud Barak announced a closure of the border crossings between Israel and Gaza.

HaQaretz reported that this week Egyptian security officials attributed the dramatic rise in the discovery of tunnels along the Egypt-Gaza border to U.S.-supplied equipment. Israeli officials also praised Egypt's heightened efforts against the tunnels, dug by Gaza-based militants to smuggle weapons and other contraband.

The Jerusalem Post quoted Turkish FM Ali Babacan as saying on Monday that he hoped that the next Israeli government would continue the Turkish-mediated indirect talks with Syria.

HaQaretz and The Jerusalem Post reported that Nir Barkat, the leading non-Orthodox candidate for mayor of Jerusalem, backs the establishment of a controversial new Jewish neighborhood near the village of Anata, at the foot of the French Hill neighborhood.

HaQaretz reported that Deputy DM Matan Vilnai wants to significantly increase the number of restraining orders and arrests against right-wing activists suspected of attacking IDF soldiers and Palestinians in the West Bank. The Jerusalem Post reported that PA President Mahmoud Abbas accused Israel of not protecting Palestinian farmers against settler attacks during the ongoing olive harvest, but that DM Barak said on Monday that his troops are doing their best. Media reported that seven young Jews were arrested on suspicion of torching Arab apartments in southern Tel Aviv's Hatikva Quarter. The victims had operated with Israeli authorities.

Israel Radio quoted the international Arabic newspaper Ash-Sharq Al-Awsat as saying that A/S David Welch said that the U.S. will not change its Syria policy.

Yediot and other media reported that the OECD ranked Israel first among Western nations in the poverty and economic inequality survey it published yesterday. An increasing number of media predicted that Israeli workers face a wave of job losses.

## Summary:

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Military correspondent Amos Harel wrote on page one of the independent, left-leaning HaQaretz: QThe problem with [Iranian] statements on a preemptive attack on Israel, and even more so with the reports of the Iranian air force exercise, is that they are not based on any proven capability.

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote on page one of Ha'aretz: QIf Livni forms a government and if Obama is elected, the most important issue that will come up in their meeting will be protecting Israel's deterrence, and preventing its being sacrificed to a deal with the Iranians or a global disarmament initiative.

## Block Quotes:

### I. "War of Words"

Military correspondent Amos Harel wrote on page one of the independent, left-leaning HaQaretz (10/22): QThe announcements of Ayatollah Seyed G. Safavi look to be another stage in the Iranian attempt to create a balance of fear and deterrence with Israel.... Teheran is interested in warning Jerusalem that as far as it is concerned, all options are open.... The problem with Safawi's statements on a preemptive attack on Israel, and even more so with the reports of the Iranian air force exercise, is that they are not based on any proven capability. A cautious estimate would be that the damage Iran could cause to Israel today is very limited.... It's hard to imagine what good such an attack would do for Iran in the near future. After all, this would be the best way to guarantee an Israeli counter-attack, as well as firm international intervention to halt the Iranian nuclear program, a program that constitutes such an important goal of the Iranian government.

### II. "Getting Used to the Inevitable"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote on page one of Ha'aretz (10/19): QThe Foreign Ministry document, the details of which are reported by HaQaretz on Sunday [October 19], translates into official language what strategic experts have been saying for a long time: Israel will not attack Iran's nuclear facilities and must get used to the reality of the United States' dialogue with Tehran, considering the expected changeover of government in Washington. Israel should keep an eye on its interests in the event of a possible U.S-Iranian dialogue, rather than live with the mistaken illusion it can unilaterally put a stop to Iranian nuclear plans.... If Livni forms a government and if Obama is elected, the most important issue that will come up in their meeting will be protecting Israel's deterrence, and preventing its being sacrificed to a deal with the Iranians or a global disarmament initiative.

## ----- 12. Mideast:

## Summary:

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Dr. Ali el-Samman, chairman of the [interfaith committee of the] Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs in Egypt, who was an adviser to the late president Anwar Sadat, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: QWe should have the courage to give Livni an opportunity and a timeout, so that we can examine her intentions and her actions in real time.

## Block Quotes:

### "Give Livni a Chance"

Dr. Ali el-Samman, chairman of the [interfaith committee of the] Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs in Egypt, who was an adviser to the late president Anwar Sadat, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (10/22): QEach time a new candidate for

prime minister appears in Israel, the leaders of the Arab world regard with suspicion his worldview, his intentions and his chances of success in forming a government. Against this backdrop, I now propose to change the rules of the game regarding the next prime minister in Israel: We should have the courage to give Livni an opportunity and a timeout, so that we can examine her intentions and her actions in real time. As soon as Livni presented her candidacy, we pounced on her with a cruel offensive focusing on her past as a Mossad agent. I remind you: Three previous Mossad directors published books and articles that actually raise positive proposals for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I imagine that the nature of the work in an intelligence agency contributes to the ability to distinguish between the attainable and the impossible. The second criticism that is leveled against Livni on our side is based on her past statements, which portray her as a rejectionist of some of the Palestinian demands. I contend that most senior politicians in Israel act and conduct their affairs under pressure not to demonstrate too positive a stance towards the Palestinians. The situation can only change when this politician becomes prime minister. As in the case of Olmert: Try to compare his statements when he assumed his post to the positions that he presents today. I would like the Arab side to give Livni an opportunity, as an initiative of trust. Give her a chance, it won't cost the Arab leaders a high political price. If Livni disappoints us, we can always withdraw the initiative of trust. I listened to Livni when she appeared at the economic conference in Davos two years ago. I listened not only to the content of her statements, but also to the tone in which they were said, in order to test her credibility. I had the feeling that on a personal level I was willing to trust her, even if her words reflected the political game. The time has come for us to examine in depth the situation in Israel. We must analyze, not show suspicion in advance -- not prejudge Livni. We should make a small opening in our picture of Israel, so that it is not only painted in black and gloomy colors. [Note: The article is being published simultaneously by the Egyptian newspaper Al-Ahram.]

### 13. U.S.-Israel Relations:

#### Summary:

Eytan Haber, veteran op-ed writer and assistant to the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, editorialized in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: We have a problem: American Jewry's link to Israel is no longer what it used to be.... Therefore, prepare for the coming of Obama -- or rather don't.

#### Block Quotes:

"Prepare for the Coming of Obama"

Eytan Haber, veteran op-ed writer and assistant to the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, editorialized in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (10/22): To tell the truth, Obama will not let Israel sleep. There will soon be a president who has nothing to do with Judaism, Jews, or Israel. His notions about what is happening in the Middle East are slim -- now, he must solve a world economic crisis before he drinks tea with Tzipi Livni and coffee with Abu Mazen.... We are talking about the present moment. We have some lightweight problems that need resolving, such as a nuclear Iran, Islamic terror, Hamas, Syria, and the economy. For generations, legends about the power of the Jewish lobby in Washington, AIPAC, and its friends have been scattered here -- those are now being tested. We have a problem: American Jewry's link to Israel is no longer what it used to be.... Therefore, prepare for the coming of Obama -- or rather, don't.

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